THE CASE OF Mixt Communion.

Whether it be lawful to Seperate from a Church upon the Account of promiſcuous Congregations and mixt Communions?

They are not all Iſrael, *that are of* Iſrael, *Rom.* 9.6.
Many are call'd, but few choſen, Matth. 20. 16.

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THE CASE OF Mixt Communion.

Whether it be lawful to Separate from a Church upon the Account of promiſcuous Congregations and mixt Communions?

THE Foundation of this Pretence ſeems to be the great miſtake of ſome Men concerning the matter whereof the Church of Chriſt is to be compoſed, which they will have to be, only real Saints and perſons endowed with inherent and ſubſtantial holineſs; Accordingly finding in the Communion of our Church many corrupt Members, who lived not anſwerable to their Holy Vocation, they, for that reaſon, amongſt ſome others alledg'd by them, cry her down as no true Church, or, which is all one, deal by her as if ſhe was ſo totally ſeparating from her Communion and ſetting up Churches of their own, conſiſting wholly of Perſons, in their Judgment, far more pure, that is, really holy and Sanctified. Into this moſt falſe and

dangerous conceit concerning the matter of the Christian Church, I cannot tell what it is that should mislead them, unless it be,

The not rightly understanding the notion of that holiness, that so often in Scripture is applied to the visible Church of God. There is a twofold holiness in Scripture, *Inherent* and *Relative*.

Inherent holiness, and that can be in none properly but God, Angels and Men; *In God* essentially and originally, as he is the most perfect Being, in whom all excellencies do possess infinite perfection; As it's applied to God, it does not only signifie a perfect freedom in him from all those sinful impureties, wherewith the sons of men are tainted, but all the excellencies of the Divine nature, as wisdom, goodness, and power, and a *super*-eminent and incommunicable greatness in them all; hence he is call'd *the holy One of* Israel, *the excellency of* Jacob, said *to swear by his holiness*, that is, by himself, and *there is none holy as the Lord*, said *Hannah*, for *there is none besides thee*, *none* holy *besides thee*, as the *Septuagint* renders it, none comparable to thee in the heighth and greatness of all thy excellencies. *In Angels and Men*, by way of participation, and as far as their natures are capable, hence there are holy Angels, and holy Men.

Psalm 89. 18.
Amos 8. 7.
Psalm 89. 35.
1 Sam. 2. 2.

Relative holiness, which when it's applied to persons, may be more properly call'd *fœderal*, and this is founded in the relation, persons and things have to God, and the nature of it consists in a separation of them from common uses, and in appropriating of them to the peculiar use and service of God: hence the Sabbath is call'd an holy day, *Judea* an holy Land, *Jerusalem* an holy City, and the Church and People of God an holy Church, that is, a Body or Society of men call'd and separated from the rest of the World to God,

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to worship him in a way distinguish'd from the rest of the World, having Laws and Promises and Rites of Worship peculiar and appropriate to themselves; This account God himself gives of it, *I have separated you,* says he to the *Israelites, from other people, that you should be mine, and ye shall be an holy people unto me.* Levit. 20. 24. For the same reason do we find that whole Church of the *Jews*, even then when its members had generally very *much corrupted themselves*, were *a rebellious people,* Deut. 9. 12. *a crooked generation*, Deut. 9. 7. Deut. 32. 5. yet upon the account of their being separated to God, and in covenant with him, stil'd by *Moses* and other inspir'd men, *his saints, his holy people, his peculiar treasure.* Deut. 7. 6. Psalm. 135. 4. For the same reason also did the Apostles dignifie those Churches to whom they wrote, with those great and glorious titles, *of saints, the sanctified, the call'd and chosen in Christ Jesus;* ἅγιοι, ἡγιασμένοι, κλητοὶ. because they, as of old the *Jews*, had entertain'd the profession of a Religion, distinct from others of the World, whereby they might be excited to the attainment of those excellencies, which in the object of their Worship they did admire and adore; and those Names being of as large a meaning as that of Christian, shew rather what they ought to have been, than assure us what they really were; for amongst those Saints were found strange immortalities altogether contradictory to the sacredness of their Vocation.

But does not the Apostle say, *Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctifie and cleanse it by the washing of water by the Word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish?* Eph. 5. 25.

I answer; Holiness in this place must be confest to be meant a real and inward holiness; but then by Church, is not to be understood the whole complex

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Body of the Univerſal Church in this World, but either that part of it that in this World is really, tho' imperfectly, holy, and is every day preſſing forwards to higher degrees of it, or elſe that Church which ſhall be in the future ſtate, when all the corrupt and unſound Members ſhall be by death and the final deciſion of God, for ever excommunicated out of it, and all the Members that remain in it, only ſuch as were in ſome acceptable degrees holy here, and ſhall then be perfected in holineſs. Neither is this to make two Churches of Chriſt, as the *Donatiſts* objected, one, in which good and bad are mingled together, and another, in which there are good alone; but only to aſſign two different ſtates of the ſame Church, the one in this World, compos'd of good and bad, externally holy in reſpect of all by vocation, and internally holy in reſpect of ſome in it by ſanctification; the other in the next World, where there ſhall be a ſeparation made betwixt the Sheep and the Goats, and all remaining in the Church, ſuch, as ſhall at once be perfectly holy and compleatly happy: This is that Church which Chriſt ſhall preſent to himſelf, glorious, not having ſpot or wrinkle or any ſuch thing, but holy and without blemiſh.

This being ſpupos'd, all that will be needful to ſay, in anſwer to this Queſtion, may be comprehended under theſe three Propoſitions.

1. *That an external Profeſſion of the Chriſtian Faith is enough to qualifie a perſon to be admitted a Member of Chriſt's Church.*

2. *That every ſuch Member has a right to all the external Priviledges of the Church, till by his continuance in ſome notorious and ſcandalous ſins he has forfeited that right, and by the juſt cenſures of the Church he be*

for

for such behaviour actually excluded from those Priviledges.

3. *That some corrupt and scandalous Members remaining in the Communion, through the want of the due exercise of discipline in it, or the negligence and connivance of the Governours and Pastors of it, gives no such cause to any to Separate from her.*

I begin with the first; That an external Profession of the Christian Faith, &c.

This Profession in grown and adult persons is to be made by themselves; Thus it was at the first erection of the Christian Church, when Persons by the Preaching and Miracles of the Apostles were converted from the *Pagan* Superstition and *Jewish* Religion to the Christian Faith; they were to believe, and with the *Eunuch* to declare their belief, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,* Acts 8. 27.

In Infants and Children not grown up to years of discretion, by their Parents, and those who at the request of their Parents, do together with them undertake for them. So great an interest and propriety have Parents in their Children, so intire an affection and concern for their good and happiness, so unquestionable an authority over them, so binding and obligatory are all their reasonable commands upon them, that we have good grounds to believe, that they that are born of Christian Parents will be brought up in the Christian Religion, and at years of understanding take upon themselves what their Parents and Sureties promis'd for them; and upon this account that profession of Faith made by others at their Baptism, in their behalf, may in a favourable sense be reckon'd, as made by themselves; so God accounted it in the *Jewish* Church, upon the account of their Parents being in covenant with God,

were

were the Children of the *Jews* esteem'd an holy Seed, and at eight days old admitted by Circumcision into the same Church and Covenant with them; And the same reason holds for admitting Children born of Christian Parents into the Christian Church by the Rite of Baptism, which is the Sign and Seal of the Covenant under the Gospel, as Circumcision was of that under the Law. Now that this external profession, without any farther signs of saving Grace, is ground sufficient for those with whom God hath entrusted the Keys and Government of his Church to admit persons into it, will appear from these particulars:

1. This is the qualification prescrib'd by our Lord: he is the Head and Founder of his Church, to him therefore does it appertain to appoint the terms and conditions of admission into it, and what these are, we may learn from that commission he gave his Apostles when he sent them out to gather a Church under him, *viz.* the becoming his Disciples; *Go ye therefore and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teach all* Nations, μαθητεύσατε, Disciple all *Nations*; Now a Disciple is properly one, not that has already attain'd to the full knowledg and saving effects of the Gospel, but only understands so much of it, as to be willing to be admitted into the Christian Church, in order to his being farther taught the one, and to have the other more throughly wrought in him. Whether men are sincere in their profession of the Christian Faith, and in their desires to be admitted Members of Christ's Church, and whether this great Privileg and Blessing of Church-membership will be effectual, to produce in them that regeneration and new creature, for which it was design'd, the Pastors and Governours of the Church cannot

Mat. 28. 19.

cannot know; This their bare profession and desire is enough to give them a title to it and qualification for it. By this rule the Apostles of Christ walkt as to this particular, even when they liv'd with him here on Earth, and were under his immediate direction: *The Pharisees heard that Jesus made and Baptiz'd more Disciples than* John, *tho' Jesus himself did not Baptize, but his Disciples.* Now if, as it was fam'd abroad, and is not in the Text contradicted, Jesus's Disciples Baptiz'd more than *John*, it follows that they baptiz'd more than were sincere, when we read that so few, not above an Hundred and Twenty continued with Christ to the last. John 4. 2. Acts 1. 15.

2. It appears from the Apostles practice afterwards in admitting persons into the Church. Nothing but a profes's'd willingness to receive the Gospel, tho they receiv'd it not from the heart, was requir'd by them, in order to it: The Text tells us, *that they that gladly receiv'd St.* Peter's *words were baptiz'd, and the same day were added to the Church about* 3000 *souls*; It's true, St. *Peter* exhorted them all to repent in order to it, but whether they did so or no, he stay'd not for proof, from their bringing forth fruits worthy of repentance, but presently upon their profest willing reception of the Word they were baptiz'd and added to the Church. One might have been apt to suspect, that amongst so great a number, all would not prove sincere Converts, and so it fell out; *Ananias* and *Saphira* were two of the number, in whom ye know, that glad reception of the Gospel was found to be but gross hypocrisie. By the same rule St. *Philip* proceeded in planting the Church at *Samaria*; *when the People seeing the miracles he did, gave heed to the doctrine he taught, concerning the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Name of Jesus*, and declar'd their belief of it, without Acts 2. 41. Acts 4. 34. Acts 5. 1, 2, 3. Acts 8. 12.

any farther examination *they were Baptized both Men and Women*: And amongst them was *Simon Magus*, wose former notorious Crimes of Sorcery, Witchcraft and Blasphemy, might have given just grounds of fear to the holy Deacon, that his Faith was but hypocritical, and his Heart not right in the sight of God, as appear'd afterwards, yet upon his believing, he was Baptiz'd; such other Members of Christ's Church were *Demas*, *Hymeneus*, and *Alexander*, they had nothing, it seems, but a bare outward profession of the Faith, to entitle them to that Priviledg, since afterwards, as we read, the one embrac'd this present World, and the other two made shipwrack of Faith and a good Conscience.

Acts 8. 20.

ver. 13.

2 Tim. 4. 10.
1 Tim. 1. 19.

3. This appears from the representation Christ hath made of his Church in the Gospel, fore-instructing his Disciples by many Parables, that it should consist of a mixture of good and bad. It is a Field wherein Wheat and Tares grow up together; A Net wherein are Fishes of all sorts; A Flour in which is laid up solid Corn and light Chaff; A Vine on which are fruitful and barren Branches; A great House wherein are Vessels of Gold and Silver, and Vessels of lesser value, Wood and Earth; A Marriage feast, where are wise and foolish Virgins, some with wedding garments, and some without, some had Oyl, and some but empty Lamps; St. *Hierome* compares it to *Noah*'s Ark, wherein were preserv'd Beasts clean and unclean; when the Apostle said, *They are not all* Israel *that are of* Israel, his meaning was, that in the *Jewish* Church many more were Circumcis'd in the Flesh, than what were Circumcis'd in Heart; and when our Saviour said, *many are call'd, but few chosen*, he declar'd the same thing, that in his Church many more were call'd and admitted into

Mat. 13. 24, 25. verſ. 47.
Mat. 3. 12.
John 15. 1.
2 Tim. 2. 20.
Mat. 25.

St. Hier. dial. con. Luciser. Arca Noæ Ecclesiæ typus.

Rom. 9. 6.

into it by Baptism, than what were sanctified by his Spirit, or should be admitted into his Heaven.

4. The many corrupt and vicious Members in the Churches, which the Apostle themselves had planted, is another proof of this; The number whereof, in all likelihood, could not have been so great, had they been so cautious and scrupulous, as to admit none into them, but whom in their judgments they thought to be really holy. In the Church of *Corinth* there were many, that had not the knowledg of God, that denied the Resurrection of the Dead, that came Drunk to the Lords Table, that were Fornicators, Unclean and Contentious Persons. In the Church of *Galatia* there were many that Nauseated the Bread of Life, and made it their Choice, to pick and eat the rubbish of the partition wall, which Christ had demolisht; The Rites of the Law which expired at the death of Christ, they attempted to pull out of their Graves, and to give a Resurrection to them; They were so much gone off from the Doctrine of Christianity, to weak and beggarly Rudiments, observing Days and Months, and Times and Years; that by reason of this their Superstition, St. *Paul* signifi'd his fears of quite losing them, and that his labour was bestowed upon them in vain.

1 Cor. 15. 34. ver. 12. 2 Cor. 12. 20, 21. 1 Cor. 7. Gal. 3. 7, 10, 11.

Amongst all the Seven Churches in *Asia*, there was not one but what had receiv'd such Members into it, that were either very Cold & Lukewarm in their Religion, or by their Vicious Lives proved a Reproach and Scandal to it; The Church of *Sardis* so swarm'd with these, that St. *John* tells us, that there were but *a few names in* Sardis *that had not defil'd their garments.* Now if the Apostles of our Lord, who had the extraordinary assistances of the Holy Ghost, for the discerning of Spirits at that time, and were thereby

Rev. 3. 1, 4.

enabl'd far beyond what any of their Succeſſors can pretend to, to diſtinguiſh betwixt the good and the bad, did notwiſtanding admit many meer formal Profeſſors into the Church of Chriſt, we may conclude that they apprehended that 'twas the will of Chriſt it ſhould be ſo.

5. No other rule in admitting perſons into the Church is practicable. Whether Perſons are really holy and truly regenerate or no, the Officers of Chriſt who know not the hearts of Men, cannot make a certain judgment of, they may through want of judgment be deceiv'd, through the ſubtilty of hypocrites be impos'd upon, through humane frailty, paſſion or prejudice, be miſguided, and by this means, many times, the door may be open'd to the bad, and ſhut againſt the good; Now that cannot be ſuppos'd to be a rule of Chriſt's appointment, which is either impoſſible to be obſerv'd, or in obſerving which, the Governours of his Church cannot be ſecur'd from acting wrongfully and injuriouſly to Men.

In ſum, Chriſt hath entruſted the power of the Keys into the hands of an Order of Men whom he hath ſet over his Church, and who, under him, are to manage the Affairs of it, but theſe being but *Earthen veſſels*, of ſhort and fallible underſtandings, he has not left the execution of their Office to be manag'd ſolely by their own prudence and diſcretion, but hath given them a certain publick Rule to go by, both in admitting perſons into his Church, and in excluding them out of it; for the one, the Rule is, open and ſolemn profeſſion of the Chriſtian Faith; for the other, open and ſcandalous Offences, prov'd by witneſſes.

2 Cor. 4 7.

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2. The second Proposition is, *That every such Member has a right to all the external Priviledges of the Church, till by his continuance in some notorious and scandalous sins he forfeits that right, and by the just censures of the Church for such behaviour he be actually excluded from those Priviledges.*

For the explanation and proof of this Proposition, these three particulars are to be done: (1.) What's meant by external Priviledges? (2.) What kind of Offenders those are that forfeit their right to them, and ought by the Censures of the Church to be excluded from them? (3.) Upon what the right of those Members that have not so offended, is grounded?

1. What's meant by external Priviledges? As there are two sorts of Members in Christ's visible Church, so there are two sorts of Priviledges that belong to them; each sort having those that are proper and peculiar to it, according to the nature of that relation they bear to the Head and their fellow Members.

1. There are Members only by *fœderal* or covenant-holiness, such as are only *born of water*, when by Baptism they were united to Christ and the Church, and took upon them the Profession and Practice of the Christian Religion; Now the Priviledges that belong to these are of the same make with their Church-membership, external, and consisting only in an outward and publick Communion with the Church in the Word and Ordinances.

2. There are Members by real and inherent holiness, such as are not *only born of Water*, *but of the Spirit* also, when by the inward operations of the Holy Ghost their Souls are renew'd after the Image of God, and made partakers of a Divine Nature; And the Priviledges

Priviledges that belong to these, are not only the forementioned ones, but together with them, others that are suitable to their more spiritual relation, inward, and such as consist in the especial and particular care and protection of God, the pardon and remission of their sins by the Blood of Christ, and the gracious influences and comforts of the Holy Ghost; All comprehended in that Prayer of the Apostle for his *Corinthians*, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.*

2 Cor. 13. 14.

Now 'tis of the first sort of Members, and that sort of Priviledges that belong to them, that the Proposition is to be understood.

2. What kind of Offenders those are that have forfeited their right to, and ought by the Censures of the Church to be excluded from those Priviledges? This the Apostle hath plainly told us, and our own Church in its Exhortation to the Sacrament fairly intimates: *I have wrote unto you*, says St. *Paul*, *not to keep company, if any Man that is call'd a Brother be a Fornicator, or Covetous, or an Idolater, or a Railer, or a Drunkard, or an Extortioner, no, not to eat*? Not only, as much as can be, to have no familier conversation with him in civil matters (tho' some must be had whilst we are in this World) but also, and more especially, to avoid communion with him in religious exercises; and how that is to be done, the Apostle tells us, *viz.* not by forsaking the Church our selves, but by doing our utmost endeavours to have him cast out of it: So it follows, *Therefore put away from among your selves that wicked person.* And, *In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit*

1 Cor. 5. 11.

ver. 10.

ver. 13.

ver. 4, 5.

may

may be ſav'd in the day of the Lord Jeſus. Agreeable hereunto are the words of the Exhortation, *If any of you be a blaſphemer of God, a hinderer and ſlanderer of his Word, an Adulterer, or be in malice or envy, or in any other greivous Crime, repent you of your ſins, or come not to that holy Table.* Such ſinners as theſe have in a manner undone and made void what was done in their behalf in Baptiſm; They, by not performing what was then promis'd for them, but living directly contrary to it, do virtually renounce that Covenant they then entred into with God in Chriſt, and fall back again into the ſtate of *Pagans* and *Infidels*; Their Sureties engag'd for them, that they ſhould believe the Chriſtian Faith, keep God's Commandments, and renounce the World, the Fleſh and the Devil; But ſuch habitual notorious Offenders as theſe, ſay, by their Practice, what had they to do to undertake ſuch things for us, we will ſtand to no ſuch engagements, but we will be at large, to believe what we pleaſe, and to practice what we fancy, and to worſhip whom we think fit; And thus, as it were, breaking off from being in Covenant with God, and virtually renouncing their Church-memberſhip, they at the ſame time loſe all right and title to thoſe Bleſſings and Privileges that were due to them upon the account thereof; and in this ſad ſtate and condition did the Primitive Chriſtians reckon all, that had highly and notoriouſly ſinn'd, amongſt whom eſpecially were the lapſed that had offer'd Sacrifice; they ſtaid not for a formal Sentence to be pronounc'd againſt them by the Church, but lookt upon them as *ipſo facto* excommunicate; and tho' till that was paſt, they could not actually be ſhut out, yet they began before to avoid their Company, and to forbear all religious commerce towards them. But ſo long as Men keep in Covenant with God, and abide

abide in his Church, which may be done by holding that profession of Faith that they made at their first entrance into it, their right to the external franchises of it remains inviolable, and their title without question. As may appear from these particulars,

1. From the Tenour of that Covenant they in their Baptism enter'd into with God; which consists of Promises on God's part, as well as Conditions on Mans. 2 *Cor.* 6. 61. The Promises on God's part, are expresst in these general words, *I will be their God*; The Conditions on Mans, in those, *and they shall be my People*: Now so far as Men perform the Conditions, so far will God make good his Promises; In what sense they are a People to God, in the same he'll be a God unto them. If a bare *fœderal* holiness can give Men a relation to God, and God upon that account owns them to be a People unto him, the same gives them some kind of interest in God, and a claim to the blessings that belong to that relation; Not, that such Members as these are to expect those special and particular favours, that are the portion of those that are more nearly, and by a kind of spiritual consanguinity allied to God in Christ, but yet being of God's houshould, are to be allowed the liberty to partake of those external blessings which he in common bestows upon the whole Family.

2. From the nature of Church-membership. Church-membership necessarily implies Church-Communion, or else it signifies nothing; for to be admitted a Member of the Church, and not to have a right in common with the rest to Church-Priviledges, is to be taken in with one hand, and to be thrown out with the other, 'tis to be put back into the state of those that are no Members, and virtually to be cut off from the Body, by being denied all communications with it; Should a Man be admitted a Member of any City or Corporation

ration, and yet at the same time be denied the privilegd of his Freedom, and not be permitted to set up a Trade, to give a Vote, or to Act in any other case, as other Members do, what would be the difference betwixt him and a Foreigner? unless it be, that his condition is the worse, by being mock'd, and abus'd and cheated with the Name, whilst he has nothing of the Priviledges of a Freeman.

3. We have the Practice of the Church of God in the Old Testament for this; The whole Nation of the *Jews* were not only permitted, but commanded by God, except in cases of legal uncleanness, and those notorious Crimes for which they were to be cast out of the Congregation, to observe his Ordinances, and to joyn in the celebration of his publick Worship, *and we know they were not all* Israel, *that were of* Israel; Three times a year were *all their Males to appear before the Lord, to keep Three solemn appointed Feasts unto him*; many of which, it is to be fear'd, had no other qualification, than what they were beholden to their birth, and the loss of their fore-skin for; Again, All the *Congregation of* Israel *were too keep the Passover*, none were denied it *but foreigners and hired servants*, and they too, no longer, but till they were Circumcis'd, and thereby admitted into covenant with God, which shews, that meer Circumcision was enough to put a Man into a capacity of Communicating with the *Jewish* Church in its most solemn and sacred Mysteries.

Exod. 23. 14, 17.

Exod. 12. 44.

4. This was also the Practice of the Christian Church in the Apostolick Age; as is plainly intimated unto us from many Scriptures; St. *Paul* tells us, *By one Spirit we are all Baptiz'd into one Body, whether* Jews *or* Gentiles, *bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. To drink into one Spirit*, particularly relates to the Cup in the Lord's Supper, and by a

1 Cor. 12. 13.

figure of the part for the whole, it's put to signifie the whole Communion; but the thing here especially to be taken notice of, is, that the Apostle makes the number of those that receiv'd the Lord's Supper to be as comprehensive and universal, as that of those that were receiv'd into the Church by Baptism; *As by one Spirit* all *were baptized into one body, so* all *were made to drink into one spirit.* The Apostles speaks the same thing again in another place, alluding to the other part of the Sacrament, *We being many, are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of one bread*; all the members that conspired to make up the one body, did partake of the one bread; But if any thing yet can be clearer, 'tis that account St. *Luke* gives us of the practice of the first Christian Church at *Jerusalem*, where it's said of the three thousand that gladly receiv'd St. *Peter*'s words, and were by Baptism added to the Church, *they*, all the three thousand, *Ananias* and *Saphira* being of the number, *continued in the Apostles doctrine, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

1 Cor. 10. 17.

5. From the end of Church-membership; which is not only for the more solemn Worship of God, and the publick profession of Religion, but also for the more effectual edification and salvation of mens souls; By Baptism we were admitted into the Church, incorporated into that Divine Society, and entitled to all the Priviledges of the Gospel, to the end, *that in the unity of the faith, and the knowledg of the Son of God, we might come to a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*; But how this is to be attain'd without being admitted to all the Acts and Offices of Communion with the Church, to the Communion of Prayers and Sacraments and the Word, and all other Priviledges and Duties, is not easily to

Eph. 4. 13.

be

be understood; hence, we may observe, that edification in Scripture is usually applied to the Church, and tho, the edification of the Church consists in the edification of the particular Members of it, yet because that is not to be had but in the Unity and Communion of the Church, 'tis usually stiled, the *edifying of the Church*, and *the edifying the body of Christ*; hence Faith is said *to come by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*; Hence we are said *to be born again, not of corruptable seed, but of incorruptable, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*; The same is expresst in those words of our Saviour's Prayer for his Disciples, *Sanctifie them through thy truth, thy Word is truth.* God's Church is his Family, which he especially takes care of and provides for, he that is of it is under the *Schechina*, the wing of the Divine Majesty and his special grace and providence; It cannot but be of mighty advantage towards our growth and improvement in all Christian graces and virtues, to have therein dispens'd to us the lively Oracles of God, and provision made for a constant succession of dispensers of the Bread of Life, to fit it to all needs and all capacities; Not to be left to the deceits and whispers of a private spirit, to personal conjectures or secret insinuations, but to have the publick Doctrine of the Church, to be our Guide and Leader; to have our Devotions mingled with the concurrent Prayers of all God's people, and so by their joynt forces, after an humble, but powerful manner, to besiege and belaguer Heaven; to have before our eyes all the great Examples in God's Church, to have our Faith strengthen'd, our Repentance heighten'd, our Love inflam'd, our Hopes and our Comforts rais'd by the Holy Communion; Will not the flame of others kindle our zeal and affections? and will it not put us into a transport

Eph. 4. 12.

Rom. 10. 17. 1 Pet. 1. 23.

John 17. 17.

Coimus incæti & ad Deum quasi manu facta precationibus ambiamus orantes, Tertul.

of devotion, to see therein Christ Crucified before our Eyes, pouring out his Blood for us, bowing his Head as it were to kiss, and stretching out his Arms as it were to embrace all that are penitent and return to him? These are some of the great Blessings and advantages that cannot be had but in Church-Communion; To which, if we shall add, that our improvement in Holiness and Vertue is more to be ascrib'd to the internal operations of God's spirit, than any virtue or efficacy there can be in those external administrations, and that God is pleas'd to promise his spirit to believers, only as they are Members of his Church, and no otherwise, than by the use and ministry of his Word and Sacraments, we shall farther see the necessity of Mens holding actual Communion with the Church, in order to their Sanctification and Salvation.

We are not now discoursing what God can or will do in some extraordinary cases, when Communion with a true visible Church cannot be had, as in a general Apostacy of the Church, or Persecution for Religion, or unjust Excommunication; but what is God's ordinary method and means of bringing Men to salvation, and that he himself tells us, is by adding them to the Church; *and the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved*; To this purpose we may observe not only in general, that whatever Christ did and suffered for Mankind, 'twas for them as incorporated into a Church; *Christ loved his Church and gave himself for it*; *Christ redeem'd his Church with his own blood*; *Christ is the Saviour of the body, that is, the Church*; But also in particular, that the Apostle confines the influences and operations of the spirit to the unity of the Church, *there is one body and one spirit*; Upon this account, *viz.* the efficacy of the means afforded in Christ's Church, and the necessity of keeping in

Acts 2. 47.

Eph. 5. 25.

Acts 26. 28.

Eph. 5. 23.

Eph. 4. 4

in Communion with it in order to salvation, was it that the Primitive Christians lookt upon it as so dreadful a thing to be shut or cast out of it; as laughing a matter as some now adays make it, as much as they slight the priviledg and benefit to be of Christ's Church, and count it their glory and saintship voluntarily to cut off themselves from it, I am sure, the Primitive Christians had a far different opinion of it; with them to be cast out of the Church, and to be deliver'd up to Satan, signified the same thing, and the one accounted full as dreadful a doom as the other; hence was it that this sentance was rarely past against an offender, but with grief and sorrow in him that was forc'd to do it; and that those against whom it was past, us'd the most ardent importunities, and were willing to undergo the severest penances in order to be restored into the bosom of it; you might have beheld them kissing the chains of imprison'd Martyrs, washing the feet of *Lazars*, wallowing at the Temple-doors, on their knees begging the Prayers of Saints; you might have seen them stript and naked, their hair neglected, their bodies whither'd, their eyes dejected, and sometimes crying out in the words of *David*, as the great *Theodosius* in the state of penance, *My soul cleaveth to the dust, quicken thou me, O Lord, according to thy Word.*

Nam judicatur ma no cum pondere ut apud certos &c. Tert. Apol.

1 Cor. 5. 2.

Nazian. 12. *Or.*

Theod. H. Eccl. 5. c. 15.

Thus much seems to be enough to be said on the Second Proposition; but that our passage to the Third may be the clearer, I shall add a little by way of Answer to an Objection or two that lies in our way. And the first is,

Obj. Do not all the Members of Christ's Church that come to the blessed Sacrament, having not the power of Godliness, as well as the Form, come unworthily and to their own great sin and danger, no less than *being guilty*

1 Cor. 11. 27, 29. *guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ, and eating and drinking their own damnation?* And can they have a right to that they are so unworthy of? In doing which they sin so hainously? and for doing which they shall be punished so severely?

Answ. I Answer these two things:

1. All, even the best men, in a strict, legal sense, are unworthy, and that even of common mercies from God, much more of this prime Duty and Priviledg of Christianity. *Every man in his best estate is altogether vanity*: *We are all an unclean thing, and our righteousness is as filthy rags*: The meaning is, all men are sinners, and their best services imperfect and impure; But then, the right they have to this Priviledg does not depend on their own merit and worth, but, as was said before, on the promise of God, when they enter'd at first into covenant with him, whereby he was pleas'd to oblige himself to be their God so far, and so long, as they continued to be his people.

Psal. 39. 5. Isa. 39. 5.

2. Those Members that we have asserted to have a right to the external Privileges of Christ's Church are not guilty of that unworthiness St. *Paul* speaks of, the sin and danger whereof is so great; and this will appear by the description he gives of those unworthy Communicants:

ἀναξίως τῦ κυρίε, S. Chrysost. 1 Cor. 11. 27. Dr. *Lightf.* in loc.

1. They discern'd not the Lord's body; *he that eats this bread, and drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of Christ*; how? *not discerning the Lord's body*. It may be, they did eat it still, as a part of the *Jewish* Passover, they understood not the nature of it what it did represent, or for what end it was instituted, being ignorant of the infinite value and merit of Christ's blood, not at all affected with the greatness of his love, nor wrought upon by the infiniteness of his mercy, and altogether as void of any sincere affection and gratitude

to

to Christ for that mighty redemption he wrought for mankind, as the *Jew* and *Pagan*, that neither know nor believe in him.

2. They were open and scandalous sinners; The Apostles charges them with Schisms and Divisions, pride and contempt of their brethren, sensuality and drunkenness; In those early days of Christianity, the Lord's Supper was usually usher'd in with a Love-feast that was eaten just before it, but so unchristian were these *Corinthians, that every one took before other his own Supper*, they run into parties, and tho' they had not yet left the place, they refus'd to communicate at the same time with their brethren, The rich despis'd and excluded the poor, that came not so well provided as they, from their feast, and that which was yet an higher aggravation of their sin, the poor were hungry, whilst the rich fed and pamper'd ther bodies to excess and luxury: *When ye come together*, says he, *this is not to eat the Lord's Supper*, this is no fit preparation for it, *for in eating every one takes before other his own supper, and one is hungry, and another is drunken*: such Swine as these ought not indeed to come to the Holy Table of our Lord, and such as these, as I said, in the beginning of my Discourse on this Proposition, have forfeited their right to it, and ought by the Censures of the Church, to be excluded; This indeed is to be unworthy with a witness, *to be guilty of the body and blood of Christ*, or as St. *Paul* sometimes words it in the case of Apostacy and other hainous sins, *to crucifie afresh the Lord of Life, to tread under foot the Son of God, and to count the blood of the Covenant an unholy thing*; that is, in an high degree to despise and vilifie the person and sufferings of the most holy Jesus, his person, as one not worthy to be obeyed and followed, his blood, as a thing of no value and merit; And what

18,21,22,ver.

Heb. 6. 6.
Heb. 10. 16.

what could such Persons expect, but that God would vindicate the honour of his own Son and the infinitely wise contrivance of the redemption of the World by his great undertaking in some remarkable way upon them, either in this World, by Temporal Judgments, *for this cause many are weak and sickly amongst you, and many sleep*; or in the next, without repentance, by their Eternal Damnation?

1 Cor. 11. 30.

Obj. But the Members of Christ's Body that come to this blessed Sacrament, and are destitute of saving grace, tho' they make a fair profession and are free from scandalous sins, are yet in an unconverted condition; and this Sacrament is not a converting, but a confirming Ordinance.

Answ. Conversion may be taken in a two-fold sense.

1. For turning Men from a state of open infidelity, to the poofession of the Christian Faith, and indeed till Men are in this sense converted, they are not to be admitted to the Sacrament; neither *Jews* nor *Turks*, nor any others in a state of *Gentilism*, till by Baptism they are receiv'd into Christ's Church, and make profession of his Name, can come to it.

2. Taking conversion, for the turning of those who are already baptiz'd, and do profess Christ's Religion, from the Evil of their ways, to a serious and hearty practice of Holiness and Virtue, and so this Sacrament is a converting Ordinance. And indeed, I do not know any more forceable Arguments to an Holy Life, than what are therein represented to us: What can more work upon ingenuous spirits, than the discovery of such undeserv'd love and kindness? Is it not enough to melt the most frozen heart into Floods of Tears and Joy, to behold therein the Blessed Jesus shedding his Blood to reconcile sinners unto God; What can more powerfully capti-

captivate the most rebellious spirits into obedience, than the assurance of a pardon of their past transgressions by that full propitiatory Sacrifice of the Son of God? What can more effectually fright Men from sin and folly, than the infinite displeasure of God declared therein against all Iniquity? How accursed a thing is sin, will the considering Communicant say, that the blessed Jesus, who did but take sin upon him, was made a Curse for it! What a mighty evil must sin needs be, when nothing could be sufficient to expiate it, but the Blood of God! What an unspeakable malignity must sin have in it, when it laid on the shoulders of Omnipotency such a load of wrath, as made him complain and sweat, and grone and die! Again, Here we repeat our Baptismal Vow to God, solemnly engage our selves afresh to be his faithful servants, and bind our selves by a new Oath, to be true to the Covenant we have made with him, and certainly that Man must have a mighty love for Sin and Death, that can break through all these Bonds and Obligations to come at it.

3. The Third Proposition; *That some corrupt and scandalous Members remaining in the Communion of the Church, through the want of the due exercise of Discipline in it, or the negligence and connivance of the Pastors and Governours of it, gives no just Cause for any to separate from her.*

Gives no just Cause; That which is chiefly pretended, is, That the viciousness of those Members do derive a stain and defilement on the whole Assembly, and pollute the Worship of God to others, as well as to themselves. Here therefore I shall shew what is to be done by us, that we be no way accessary to others

ſins, and then, upon that condition, that we cannot be polluted by their ſinful company. Now many things are to be done by good men who are to joyn in mixt Aſſemblies that the Communion receive no perjudice by the corruption of ſome of its Members,

They are frequently to exhort and adviſe them; for this end are we plac'd in the communion of Saints, and tho' to inſtruct the Flock God hath appointed a whole Order of Men on purpoſe, yet is it alſo the Duty of every private Chriſtian in his place and calling, *to exhort one another daily, whilſt it is cal'd to day? to conſider one another, to provoke unto love und to good works.*

Heb. 3. 13. Heb. 10. 24.

They are prudently and with much affection to admoniſh and reprove them; we muſt not be ſo rudely civil as to ſuffer ſin to lie upon them without diſturbance: ſo runs the Precept, *Thou ſhalt not hate thy Brother in thy heart, but thou ſhalt rebuke thy Brother, and not ſuffer ſin to be upon him: and if any man be overtaken in a fault*, ſays the Apoſtle, *ye that are ſpiritual, reſtore ſuch an one in the ſpirit of meekneſs, conſidering that thou alſo may'ſt be tempted.*

Lev. 19. 17. Gal. 6. 1.

They are to bewail their ſins, and to pray for their reformation; this is the true ſpirit and temper of a good man, he cannot ſee God diſhhonour'd, his Laws trampled upon, his Brother wilfully undoing himſelf, but he muſt be deeply touch'd and affected with it; *Rivers of water run down my eyes*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *becauſe Men keep not thy law*; And when in *Ezekiel's* time the *Jewiſh* Church, both Prieſts and People, were very much corrupted, the Holy Ghoſt gives it as the particular mark of *the faithful* and upright, not that they ſeparated, *but ſighed and cryed for all the abominations that were done in her.* Of the ſame holy frame and diſpoſition of mind was St. *Paul*, he could not men-

Ezek. 9. 4.

tion

tion those in the Church at *Philippi*, who, whilst they profest Christianity, shew'd themselves by their sensuality and earthly-mindedness to be Enemies to the Cross of Christ, without Sorrow and Tears; *Of whom*, says he, *I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, that they are Enemies to the Cross of Christ, whose God is their Belly*, &c. Phil. 3. 18.

They are to avoid, as much as they can, their company, especially all familiarity with them; and tho' in order to their conviction and reformation, and in such cases where necessary business requires it, and the publick Worship of God can't be perform'd but in conjunction with such persons, I may be in their company without blame; yet in all other cases, I am to shew my dislike and abhorrence of their sins by shunning their society. *If any Man obey not our Word by this Epistle, note that Man and have no company with him, that he may be asham'd.* Again says the same Apostle, *I wrote to you in an Epistle, not to keep company, if any man be a Fornicator, or an Idolater— or*, &c. *with such an one, no, not to eat.* 2 Thess. 3. 14.

If private and often repeated Admonitions by himself, or before one or two more, will not do, they are then to tell the Church of them, that by its more publick Reproofs the scandalous Member may be reclaim'd, or by its just Censures be cut off from the Communion. *If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the Church.* Matth. 18 17. Our Church hath given every Minister of a Parish power to refuse all scandalous and notorius sinners from the Lord's Supper, and as slack and as much disus'd as Discipline is amongst us, were such persons more generally inform'd against and complaind of, they would not find it so easie a matter to continue in their Offences and the Church together. *Rubr. before the Commun.*

You see by what means the Church may either be clear'd in some measure of publick Offenders, or the Members of it, together with the Ordinances of God secur'd from infection by their fellowship. By this did the Primitive Christians shew their Zeal for their Religion, as well as by suffering for it; They were infinitely careful to keep the honour of their Religion unspotted, and the Communion of the Church as much out of danger, as they could, from the malignant influence of bad examples; for this reason they watch'd over one another, told them privately of their faults, and when that would not do, brought them before the cognizance of the Church; and tho' lapsing into Idolatry, in times of prosecution, was the common sin, that for some Ages chiefly exercis'd the Discipline of the Church, yet all Offences against the Christian Law, all Vices and Immoralities, that were either publick in themselves, or made known and prov'd to the Church, came also under the Ecclesiastical Rod, and were put to open Shame and Pennance; this was that Discipline that preserv'd their Manners so Uncorrupt, and made their Religion so Renown'd and Triumphant in the World; and how happy would it be for us in this loose and degenerate Age, (as our own Church expresses her wishes and desires) were it again in its due Force and Vigour restored and resetled amongst us.

Preface to the Comminat.

But, if after all imaginable care and endeavour by private Christians, some scandalous Members, through the defects of Power in the Discipline, or of Care and Watchfulness in Governours, should remain in the Church, whatever pollution those whose Office it is *to rebuke with all Authority*, may draw on themselves by suffering it, private Members, that are no way, neither by consent, nor councel, nor excuse, accessary to their

Tit. 3. last.

their Sin, can receive none; for sin no otherwise pollutes, than as it is in the will, not as it is in the understanding, as it's chose and embrac'd, & not as it's known; I may know Adultery and yet be Chast, see Strife and Debate in the City and yet be Peaceable, hear Oaths and Curses and yet tremble at God's Name; *Noah* was a good Man in an evil World, *Lot* a righteous person amongst the conversation of the wicked; neither is there any more fear of pollution from wicked Men in Sacred than in Civil Society; Our Saviour and his Apostles were not the least defil'd by that Society they had with Scribes and Pharisees, nor by that Familiarity they had with the accnrsed *Judas*, tho' he eat the Passover with them, and they kept him company after they knew him to be a Traytor; What pollution did *Abel* receive from *Cain* when they Sacrifie'd together? Or *Elkanah* and *Hannah* from *Eli*'s Debauch'd Sons, when at *Shilo* they Worshipt together? The good and bad indeed Communicate together, but in what? not in sin, but in their common duty; and tho' to Communicate with sin is sin, yet to Communicate with a sinner in that which is not sin can be none; Communion is a common union, many partaking of one thing wherein they do agree, now the common union of the good and bad in the Church is not in evil, but in hearing of the Word, in receiving of the Sacrament, and in other holy Ordinances and Exercises; when therefore some do evil, the Communion in spiritual things is not polluted, becaufe evil is no part of the union in common one with another, but the error of Man by himself, out of the Communion, which he himself, and they only that have been partakers with him in it, shall answer for.

Obj

1 Cor. 5. 6. *Obj.* But does not the Apostle say, *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?*

Ans. This is a proverbial speech, and shews only that sin, like leaven, is of a very spreading and diffusive nature, not that it actually defiles where it is not admmitted: A People in one Assembly are as a lump, and a wicked person amongst them is as leaven, but now altho' the leaven is apt to conveigh it self through the whole lump, yet only are those parts actually leaven'd with it that take the leaven; so it is with the Church, the sinner by his bad example is apt to spread the infection through the whole body, but only such as allow or any way communicate with him in his sin, 1 Cor. 1. 11. are actually infected; such as *Chloe*, that reprove the offender and present him, doing their utmost endeavour in their place ro reform him, remain in spight of its malignity, unpolluted: *Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees*, says our Saviour, he adviseth not his Disciples to leave their Assemblies, but to beware that they take no leaven of them; shewing thereby, that a good Man that stands upon his gaurd may be where leaven is and yet not be leaven'd; The incestuous person was not cast out of the Church of *Corinth*, and yet the ver. 7. Apostle says, at least of some of them, *ye are unleaven'd*: And why may not the joynt Prayers of the Church and the Examples of Pious and Devout Men in the Communion, be as sovereign an antidote against the infection, as the bare company of wicked Men is of power to convey it? Why should not the holy Ordinances of God and the presence of holy Men at them be of as much virtue and efficacy to purge and sanctifie the whole body, as the impurities of the bad are to stain and 2 Cor. 30. 18. pollute it; especially considering that the sins of the wicked shall never be imputed to the righteous, but the Prayers of the righteous have obtain'd pardon for the wicked.

Obj.

Obj. But were not the pollutions of sin typified by the legal uncleannesses? And was not every thing that the unclean person touch'd, made unclean? Numb. 19. 13, 28.

Ans. Those legal and ceremonial pollutions concern not us under the Gospel; we may touch a grave, a dead person, a leper, and not at all be the less clean; it's not any outward uncleanness, but the corruption and depravity of the inner man that incapacitates men for the Worship of God and Communion with him.

2. Those legal pollutions did not defile the whole Communion, but only those particular persons whom the unclean person touch'd, for (1.) There was no sacrifice appointed for any such pollution as came upon all for the sin of some few. (2.) Tho' the Prophets many times reproved the Priests for not separating *the clean from the unclean, the precious from the vile, the holy from the prophane*, yet did they never teach, that because the unclean came into the Congregation through the neglect of their duty, the whole Communion was polluted by it; but as many as touch'd the unclean person were unclean, so as many as have fellowship with the wicked in their sins are polluted by it; to partake with men in their sins in a moral sense answers to the legal touching an unclean thing. Jer. 15. 10. Ezek. 22. 26.

3. When it's said that the unclean person, that did not purifie himself, *defiled the Tabernacle and polluted the Sanctuary*, the meaning is, that he did so to himself, but not to others; so does a wicked man, the Ordinances of God, in respect of himself, but not of others: The Prayers of the wicked, tho' joyn'd with those of the Church, are an abomination unto God, whilst at the same time the Prayers of good men go up as a sweet smelling savour and are accepted by him; The person that comes unworthily to the Sacrament of the Lord's

Lord's Supper, eats and drinks Judgment to himself, but that hinders not, but that those who at the same time come better prepared, may do it to their own Eternal Comfort and Salvation; *To the pure all things are pure, but to them that are defil'd and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their Mind and Conscience is defil'd.*

Tit. 1. 15.

The weakness of this suggestion, that the whole Communion and the Ordinances of God are polluted by the wicked Mans company at and among them, being laid open; The truth of the Proposition may be farther evinc'd from these particulars:

1. From the example of God's People in the Church of the *Jews*; We do not find that the sins either of the Priests or the People became at any time an occasion of separation to them; What sins could be greater than those of *Eli's* Sons? What higher aggravations could there be of sin? Whether we consider the quality of the persons that sinn'd, being the High-Priests Sons, or the publick scandal aed impudence of the sin, *Lying with the women before the door of the Tabernacle*; yet did not the People of God, not *Elkanah* and *Hannah* by name, refrain to come up to *Shilo* and to joyn with them in the publick Worship: Nay, they are said to *transgress* who refus'd to come, tho' they refus'd out of abhorance and detestation to the wickedness of those Men; *They abhorr'd the sacrifices of the Lord*; *ye make the Lord's people to transgress*: In *Ahab's* time, when almost all *Israel* were Idolaters and *halted betwixt God and* Baal, yet then did the Prophet *Elijah* summon all *Israel* to appear on Mount *Carmel*, and held a Religious Communion with them in Preaching and Praying, and offering a Miraculous Sacrifice; neither did the Seven Thousand that had kept themselves upright

1 Sam. 2. 17, 24.

upright and not bowed their knee to *Baal*, absent themselves because of the Idolatry of the rest, but they all came and join'd in that publick Worship perform'd by the Prophet: *All the People fell on their faces, saying, the Lord he is God, the Lord he is God.* 1 King. 18.39. All along the Old Testament, when both Prince, and Priests, and People, were very much deprav'd and debauch'd in their manners, we do not find that the Prophets at any time exhorted the faithful and sincere to separate, or that they themselves set up any separate Meetings, but continued in Communion with the Church, Preaching to them, and Exhorting them to Repentance.

2. From the Example of God's People in the New Testament; In the Apostolick Churches of *Corinth*, *Galatia*, and the seven Churches in *Asia*, many of the Members were grown very bad and scandalous, yet do we not read of the example of any good Man separating from the Church, or any such Precept from the Apostles so to do; They do not tell them that the whole Body was polluted by those filthy Members, and that, if they would be safe themselves, they must withdraw from their Communion, but exhort them to use all means to reclaim them, and if neither private nor publick Admonitions and Reproofs would do, then to suspend them from the Communion of the Church, till by Repentance and Amendment they render'd themselves capable of being restored to Peace and Pardon; The Spirit of God in the Second of the *Revelation*, sends his Instructions to the Angels, that is, to the Bishops of those seven Churches in *Asia*, (whose Office it was) to Preach Repentance to them, and by their Authority, to reform

abuses, but gives them no Command to cease the publick Administration, or to advise the unpolluted part to separate from the rest; nay, altho' those Candlesticks were very foul, yet was our Lord pleas'd still to bear with them, and *to walk in the midst of them*; and certainly so long as Christ affords his presence in a Church, none of its Members ought to withdraw theirs.

Rev. 2. 1.

3. From our Saviour's own example, who, notwithanding the Church of the *Jews* in his time was a most corrupt Church, and the Members of it very leud and vicious, yet kept in Communion with it, and commanded his Disciples so to do: We read that the Scribes and Pharisees, who rul'd the Ecclesiastical Chair at that time, *had perverted the law, corrupted the worship of God, were blind guides, devoured widows houses, were hypocrites and such as only had a form of godliness*, yet did not our Saviour separate from their Communion; but was made under the Law, freely subjected himself to all the Rites and Ceremonies of it, he was circumcis'd on the eighth day, redeem'd by a certain price, being a Son and a First-born, observ'd their Passover and other Feasts enjoin'd by their Law, yea, and that of the dedication too, tho' but of humane institution, was baptiz'd amongst them, preach'd in their Temples and Synagogues, reason'd with them about Religion, exhorted his Disciples to hear their Doctrine, tho' not to follow their Practice; What greater cause on the account of corruption in manners could be given to separate from a Church, than was here? yet how careful was our Saviour both by his Example and Precept, to forbid and discountenance it; *They sit in* Moses's *chair, hear them.*

Mat. 15. 6, 7, 8.

Luke 2. 22.

Matth. 26.

John 17. 37.

John 10. 6, 7.

Mat. 6. 7.

4. Form

4. From the Apostle's express command to hold communion with the Church of *Corinth*, notwithstanding the many and great immoralities that were amongst the Members of it; *There were Schisms and contentions amongst them, strifes and envyings, fornication and incest, eating at the Idols table, and coming not so soberly as became them to the table of our Lord*; yet does the Apostle not only not command them to separate, but approves their meeting together, and exhorts them to continue it, *But let a Man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup*; In which words the Apostle plainly solves the Case I am discoursing on, and shews what private Christians, in whose power it is not judicially to correct Vice, are to do, when they see so many vicious Members intruding to the blessed Sacrament; *viz.* not to abstain from it, but by preparation and examination of themselves to take care that they be not of their number; If to seperate, had been the way, the Apostle would then have manag'd his Discourse after this manner, There are many Schisms and Strifes in the Church, there is an incestuous person not cast out, many proud contemners of their Bretheren, Men of strange opinions, of untam'd appetites, and unbridled passions, and therefore I advise you not to come amongst them, nor to partake of the Holy Sacrament with them, lest you be infected with their Sores, and partake of their Judgments; But advising Men to examine themselves, and then to come, he plainly intimates, that 'twas their duty to continue in the Communion of the Church notwithstanding these; as if he had said, I do not mention the foul Enormities

1 Cor. 1. 12, 13. 1 Cor. 3. 3. 1 Cor. 5. 1.

1 Cor. 5. 4. 1 Cor. 11. 18

of some that come to this holy Table, to discourage you from coming, lest ye should be polluted by their sins, but to excite you to a due care and examination of your selves, that you be not polluted by any sinful acts and compliances of your own, and then there's no danger of being defil'd by theirs.

But as clear and satisfactory as this Proposition seems to be, it yet suffers very much from the Exceptions of some weak Understandings, who meeting often in Scripture with such Commands and Exhortations as these, *to separate, to come out, not to touch, to have no fellowship with*, and the like, presently, without staying to examine the sense of the Texts, conclude, that it is the duty and character of good Men to be always separating; and tho, wherever those places of Scripture are found, they are for the most part to be understood with relation to Idolaters and Idolatrous Practices, either amongst *Jews* or *Gentiles*, yet will they have them extended to every thing and person that either really is, or they think fit to call, a Corruption, or a corrupt Member in the Church of God.

Many Texts of Scripture are misunderstood and misappli'd by them to this purpose; I shall instance only in two as the chief, and hope in rescuing them from the false glosses they labour under, to give a deliverance to all the rest. The first is,

Obj. 1. Those words of the Apostle, *Wherefore come*
2 Cor. 6. 17. *out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.*

Ans.

Anſ. This being the main place to which they fly upon all occaſions as their ſtrongeſt hold, I ſhall give it a more particular conſideration, and that by ſhewing theſe three things; (1.) The occaſion of this Apoſtolical admonition. (2.) What were the perſons the converted *Corinthians* were to ſeparate from. (3.) What was the unclean thing they were not to touch.

1. What was the occaſion of this Apoſtolical Exhortation: To this purpoſe you muſt know that the converted *Corinthians* liv'd in civil Society amongſt the unbelieving *Gentiles*, by whom many of them being their kinſfolk and friends after the fleſh, were often invited to their Idol-feaſts, to which ſome of them 1 Cor. 10. 27. did not ſcruple to go and eat of the things ſacrific'd to Idols, even in the Idol's Temple, thinking it not unlawful to do ſo, ſo long as they knew that an Idol was nothing, and did not intentionally go and eat in any honour to the Idol. Now from this Practice the 1 Cor. 8. 4. Apoſtle diſſuades them by theſe two Arguments; (1.) Upon the account of ſcandal to their weak brethren, telling them that tho' they that were ſtrong, knew that an Idol was nothing in the World, and that there was but one God, and ſo could not be ſuppos'd to worſhip the Idol when they eat of the Idol's ſacrifice; yet ſome other weak Chriſtians and new Converts might not know ſo much, and conſequently by their practice might be drawn into ſin, not only to go to thoſe Feaſts, but to do it in honour to the Idol. (2.) As harmleſs an action as they eſteem'd it, that 'twas 1 Cor. 8. 7. plain Idolatry; *Be not ye Idolaters, as were ſome of* 1 Cor. 10. 14. *them, as it is written, they ſate down to eat and to drink,*

drink, and rose up to play; that is, they eat of those
Exod. 32. 6. Sacrifices that had been offered up to the golden Calf; and that this Action was Idolatrous, he proves by an Analogy it bears to a Rite of the same nature, both amongst *Jews* and *Christians*, for as the *Jews*, when they feasted on the Sacrifices, did it in honour
1 Cor. 10. 18. to God, to whom the Sacrifices were offer'd, and as the *Christians*, when they partake of the Lord's
ver. 16. Supper, do it in honour to Christ, whose Death and Passion is therein commemorated, so when they did eat of the Idols Sacrifices, they must have been thought to do it in honour to the Idol, because to
ver. 20. the Idol was the Sacrifice offer'd. But, blessed be God, we have not the like occasion for such an Exhortation, we live not in a civil society with Idolaters, but under a Christian Prince, and with a People professing the Christian Religion; Here are no publick Idols set up, nor any Feasts kept in honour of them; had the Case been thus with us, we had been as much concern'd in the Text as the *Corinthians* were, but being far otherwise, not the least aid can be fetcht from hence, to defend Separation from our Publick Assemblies.

2. Who were the persons the Christian *Corinthians* were requir'd to seperate from: They were no better than *Unbelievers*, than *Infidels*, than *Idolaters*; *What fellowship hath righteousness with un-*
2 Cor. 6. 14. ver. 15. *righteousness? And what communion hath light with*
ver. 16. *darkness? And what concord hath Christ with* Belial? *Or what part hath he that believeth with an Infidel? And what agreement hath the Temple of God with Idols?* And then it follows, *wherefore come out*
ver. 17. *from amongst them*, &c. But now because Christians, by

by the Apostles command were to separate from the Assemblies of *Heathen* Idolaters, does it therefore follow that they must separate from the Assemblies of *Christians*, because some, who while they profess Christ, do not live like *Christians*, afford their presence at them? Is there no difference betwixt a *Pagan* and an Infidel, that denies Christ and worships Devils, and an immoral *Christian*, who yet outwardly owns Christ and worships the true God; Betwixt a Church wholly made up of *Heathens* and *Idolaters*, and a Church made up of a mixture of good and bad *Christians* together.

3. What is the unclean thing they are not to touch; *viz.* the unclean and abominable Practices that were us'd by the Heathens in the Worship of their Gods. It's call'd by the Apostle in another place, *the unfruitful works of darkness*, and again, thus describ'd by him, *it's a shame to speak of those things that are done of them in secret*; These they were not to touch, to have no fellowship with them in, but rather to reprove them, that is in judgment to condemn them, by words to reprove them, in conversation to avoid them. But now because Christians are not to communicate with Heathens in their filthy mysteries, nor to partake with any sort of wicked Men in any Action that's Immoral, does it therefore follow, that they must not do their duty, because sometimes it cannot be done but in their company? Must they abstain from the Publick Worship of God and their Lord's Table, to which they are commanded, because Evil Men, who, till they repent, have nothing to do there, rudely intrude themselves? May they not joyn with bad Men in some cases, where

Eph. 4. 11.

where it cannot be well avoided, in doing a good Action? because they must in no case and on no account joyn with them in doing a sinful one? Because they have omitted their Duty, must I neglect mine? Because they sin in coming unpreparedly, must I sin in not coming at all? Will their sin be any plea or excuse for mine? If I Communicate with them, will their unworthiness be laid at my door? If I separate because of that, shall they answer for my contempt, as well as for their own prophanation of it? No surely, every Man shall bear his own burden. *The soul that sinneth, it shall dye.* The second is, that Text,

Ezek. 18. 20.

Obj. 2. In the *Revelation, Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*

18. c. 4.

Answ. This place is most certainly to be understood of Idolaters, and according to most Interpreters, of the *Roman* Idolatrous Polity, and is a command to all Christians to forsake the Communion of that Church, lest they endanger their own salvation by Communicating with her in Masses and other Idolatrous Worship. And if this be the true sense of the words, it abundantly justifies our Separation from the *Roman* Church, But affords not the least plea for Dissenters to separate from ours, unless any of them are so hardy as to say, that there is none, or but little difference betwixt the Church of *Rome* and the Church of *England.* But blessed be God, we have a Church reform'd from all her Superstitions, that retains nothing of hers, but what she retains of the Gospel and the Primitive Church.

Here's

Here's no drowning Religion in shadow and formality, nor burying her under a load of ritual and ceremonial Rubbish, nor dressing up Religion in a flanting pomp to set her off, or a gaudy garb to recommend her, much less in such fantastical Rites, such antick Vestments and Gesticulations that may justly render her ridiculous and contemptible; but her Ceremonies are few and decent, countenanc'd by Primitive Antiquity, and very much becoming the gravity and sobriety of Religion.

Here are no Half-Communions; no more Sacraments thrust upon us than our Lord himself instituted, and yet those left whole and entire, for our use and comfort, that he did; no Prayers in an unknown Tongue, which the votary neither minds nor understands; no praying to Saints or Angels; no adoring Images, Pictures, and Reliques; no worshipping the Creature besides or more than the Creator, which they do, who in all their publick Offices of Devotion, for one Prayer to God, have order'd ten to be made to the blessed Virgin. περὶ τὴν λίσιαν τα.

Here's no Doctrine obtruded on our Faith that's contrary to reason, nay, to sense, to all our senses, no Practices allowed that are forbidden by God, no Pardons to be bought, no Indulgences to be purchas'd no expunging any one Commandment out of the Decalogue, or contriving arts and devices to make void the rest; but as her Devotions are pure and spiritual, having God, and him only, for their object, so her Doctrine is sound and orthodox, having Christ for its Corner-stone, and the Prophets and Apostles for its Foundation.

A Church that needs no counterfeit Legends, no incredible Miracles, no ridiculous Fables to promote her veneration, whose security lies not in the Peoples ignorance, but in their inlightned understandings; that can defend it self without the help of spurious Authors, or corrupting the words and sense of Authentick ones, a Church that dares to be understood, and is sure, the more she's lookt into, the more to be embrac'd and admir'd.

And I would to God, 'twas as easie a matter to clear every one of her Members from Vice, as it is her Constitution from Corruption; *But let those that stand, take heed lest they fall*, and be sure to sweep their own door clean, who are so apt to throw dirt in the faces of their Fellow-Christians; St. *Paul's* advice is, *that every Man should examine himself*, and I am much mistaken, if spiritual pride, a rash and censorious judging of our Bretheren; be not as great a crime, as some of those that are lookt upon to be of *so polluting and infectious a nature* in other Men; I need not say, how directly opposite this Pharisaical humour is to that humility, meekness and self-denial that the Gospel of our Saviour injoyns? how unsuitable to the temper of all good Men, who are more apt to suspect and accuse themselves, than others, who, the more holy they are, the more sensible of their own imperfections? How contrary to the example of our blessed Lord; who balkt not at any time the society of Publicans and sinners, who when he knew what was in Man, and who it was that should betray him, yet admitted *Judas* into the number of his Disciples, and familiarly converst with him? And yet, how fully it answers to the Spirit and *Genius* of those ancient Schismaticks, the

Nova-

Novatians and the *Donatists*? Might I stay to run the parallel, both those Schisms, and this amongst us, would be found to begin on the same Principles, slackness of Discipline in the Church, and corruption in Manners; To be carried on by the same pretences, zeal for purity, and fear of pollution; to spring from the same bitter fountain, pride and arrogance; But I speak not this to excuse our selves, or to recriminate them; My hearty Prayer to God is, *that all* Israel *may be saved*; that they, who dissent from us, would now, at last, lay aside all passion and prejudice, all groundless scruples and pretences, and come in and joyn their forces with our Church against the common Adversary; And that we, who profess our selves Members of the Church of *England*, would be extreamly careful, for the honour of our Religion, for the preservation of our Church, for the recovery of our straying Bretheren, (for whose sakes, in some cases, we are bound to lay down our lives) to lay down our sins, and, instead of blocking up the way against any, by scandalous living, invite and allure them all in, by exemplary Holiness and Purity, and this I am sure, how short soever my Discourse comes of, would be a full Answer to, and a perfect Confutation of this Objection.

FINIS.